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JOHN H. McDOWELL

***Halloween Costuming among Young  
Adults in Bloomington, Indiana:  
A Local Exotic***

What is the meaning of the word “exotic”? Does it denote, as popular usage would suggest, a category of places and customs remote from the home perspective of the viewer? Or rather, is the label “exotic” a signal that any entity whatsoever, distant or intimate, is being regarded with special scrutiny? I would argue for the latter interpretation, because even the commonplace can appear exotic under close inspection. The mission of the riddle, for example, is to render exotic, through close description, the everyday objects that provide a familiar context for our routine lives.

In this contribution, I want to address Halloween costuming among young adults in Bloomington, Indiana, primarily through the words of natives to this tradition, one which I hope will emerge as quite exotic by the time this telling is done. Through one of the paradoxes of modern social science, we know more about the exotic (in the first sense) costume traditions in far-flung areas of the world than about the Halloween costuming that takes place right in our houses and on our streets. Naturally, Halloween costuming in Bloomington is a part of a larger set of worldwide costuming traditions, whose common thread is the creation of *inhabitable representations*, that is, metaphors that can be carried about on the mobile human frame. The Bloomington case figures as an instance of secular, festive costuming in this diverse set of costume customs.

The following candid remarks on Halloween costuming are gathered from journals kept by students in my undergraduate folklore class, who documented their own involvement in Bloomington’s Halloween of

(10) I wish I could think of something real original. . . . Halloween is a time to be creative and imaginative.

(11) My mother offered to send down a cheerleaders outfit. Of course I refused that because it would look like I'm trying to be a cheerleader.

(12) A friend of mine is having a party and he wants me to come there. Now I don't want to dress like an army man. I would rather be something cuter.

(13) I just don't feel satisfied by going to our party as a bag of trash.

(14) I think everybody would like to have the best costume but they don't worry about it if they don't.

(15) Denise is now going to be a Kahlua bottle again because she said she doesn't want to have to explain to everyone why she is a penguin.

There is some uneasiness about presenting a theme that might prove too revealing. According to one journal excerpt,

(16) Halloween is a time for people to live out their fantasies.

Thus, there are two dangers here, either that people will mistakenly probe beneath the costume to find a desire not actually present (the young woman who did not want to be seen as coveting the role of cheerleader, item 11 above), or that people will correctly identify a desire one would rather preserve as private knowledge (the young woman who preferred not to have to explain her genuine fascination with penguins, item 15 above).

Other broader considerations enter in. The individual hopes to select a costume that will fall into a category of generally clever and appropriate thematics: a costume neither too conservative nor too radical; a cute costume rather than a dowdy one. The many factors impinging upon the selection make this decision quite torturous for some, as in the case of Denise, who vacillated between the themes of Kahlua bottle and penguin right up until the very day of the party. In many instances, journals project a certain costume theme, only to reject it in favor of some other.

Anticipation and apprehension are pivotal emotions in the move towards choosing a costume. How then is the critical choice brought about? The journals suggest that the subjects search their minds as well as survey other pieces of available information, in order to finally settle on an acceptable theme. Some individuals draw on their childhood

experiences with Halloween and use these as a kind of enabling charter:

(17) She likes to go to the parties dressed up as a witch. This was the costume she would always wear when she was a kid . . . she said she doesn't think she will ever outgrow this phase of her childhood.

For others, the idea of wearing anything reminiscent of childhood was anathema. There seemed, in particular, to be a rejection of the mass-produced costumes found in Target, K-Mart and the like, as inappropriate to the level of maturity and sophistication of a young adult.

Settling on a costume theme is an intensely private event, and yet at the same time it triggers a great deal of collective activity. The journals record a tremendous amount of consultation among friends:

(18) Today was a great day, I found I was going to a party and I had to get dressed up. I didn't know what to wear so I went upstairs to ask these girls what to wear. The girls told me to dress as a cool tough guy.

People very frequently conspire together on a costume theme. In many instances, close friends, in pairs, trios, and beyond, enlarge the scope of this conspiracy by selecting a theme with integrated parts so that they can act as a sort of Halloween team:

(19) I think my suitemate and I are going to dress like the Blues Brothers, John Belushi and Dan Akroyd.

(20) It was really fun, we both dressed up as nuns.

(21) It seems that every year they all dress similar. Two years ago they all dressed up as bumblebees, and last year they went as three of the seven dwarfs.

(22) Susie told me today that she thought she and Joe could go to the Halloween party dressed as Tylenol capsules. Joe told her that he wanted matching costumes.

(23) My girlfriend and I got dressed up as Frank Zappa and his daughter, Moon Unit.

(24) Someone mentioned the fact that no one had decided what they were going to go as for Halloween. Lisa said that we should go as Giligan's Island. Everyone picked a member of the crew and we were set for Halloween.

(25) Cindy is coming to our party as a mouse. Her and 2 other friends are going to be 3 blind mice.

(26) I went as a professional golfer. I had one of my friends be my caddie. He carried around a golf bag for most of the night.

In this manner, the costume theme can become an extension of the peer group, a visible manifestation of a sense of solidarity among friends. The most common coordinated themes were dyadic, marking special relationships among roommates, romantic couples, and close friends. But there were numerous larger social entities represented, ranging from three close friends to entire cliques and sets of dormitory hall mates. Thus, in deciding on a costume theme, it was not uncommon to consult with friends—to provide ideas and a preliminary check on an idea-in-progress—and in a considerable number of cases, coordinated costume themes emerged from these consultations.

In addition to consultation with friends, prospective costumers employed another technique, that of visiting the stores, to make purchases related to costumes, or often to first get ideas for a costume:

(27) A lot of people are going to Salvation Army and trying on clothes for their costumes.

(28) We arranged to go at 3:00 on Thursday to some costume stores to try and get some ideas.

(29) We want to be something easy so we don't have to spend a lot of money. We plan to go to the costume shops for ideas.

Shopping expeditions were made to three kinds of commercial outlets: the five and dime operations like K-Mart and Target, featuring mostly mass-produced, popular-culture themes for costumes; one of several costume shops in Bloomington, featuring mostly original costumes based on a wide range of themes; and to local charity stores, Salvation Army and Goodwill, known to offer archaic clothing suitable for fashioning into Halloween costumes. While some of these excursions undoubtedly lead to purchases, more commonly, individuals browse, perhaps purchase a bit of raw material or a part of a costume, and then go home to elaborate by hand a Halloween costume. But we will return to this matter later.

Of course, a large element of serendipity affects the process of choosing a costume theme. In many instances, people simply looked around their home, or the home of a friend or relative, and spotted some

promising ingredient for a potential costume. But most costumers selected a theme, whether fortuitous or carefully planned, that in some sense was meaningful to them. While the route to selecting a theme was often circuitous, and quite variable from one person to another, one persistent element can be detected: the tendency to begin with the innate resources of the costumer, whether physical or conceptual, and work outwards from there. The journals provide ample evidence of this:

(30) He wants to be an elf but I keep telling him he's too tall and too fat to be one.

(31) One of the guys is nicknamed 'Butch'--well, he went as a butcher.

(32) One person was dressed up as an exotic Las Vegas showgirl. She isn't extremely pretty and actually wishes she could dance on stage. She picked a really good costume I thought.

(33) The Lil Sis president went as Marilyn Monroe, except that she looks very similar to Marilyn herself.

(34) I asked my friend, a rather heavy set person, what he was going to be and he said, 'a pig'. I couldn't help but laugh. I thought to myself that he wouldn't even have to dress up.

(35) A few people talked about Halloween costumes. We tried to figure what character we all looked like.

(36) I noticed a general consensus on the costumes girls wore. The good-looking ones wore mostly playboy bunny outfits or other skin-tight or revealing costumes. They were the girls getting all the attention, while the well-fed girls wore clown suits and baggy clothing.

The journals indicate that the Halloween costume theme was generally viewed as an extension of the self. In some cases, the physical self seemed to favor or work against a certain costume. In other cases, the character of the individual, or a person's desires or inclinations, operated in this fashion. Costuming, a representation of the other, was clearly perceived as an extension, even a revelation, of the self. In their own choices, and the choices of others, subjects perceive a carry-over from the frame of real life into the frame of costuming. Perhaps it is this carry-over, in fact, that makes the choosing of a costume theme such a frightening, and ultimately liberating affair. Subjects often feel a great deal of satisfaction after making their choice:

(37) This year I will be a 'nerd'. I have not heard of any idea like this, it will truly be unique.

(38) After many hours of concentrated thought, I finally decided on a Halloween costume that suited me just fine. I was so happy to be something else for Halloween than the yearly hobo. Yes, this will be a Halloween to be remembered.

Let us inspect two choices in some detail. One woman who went out as a generic maxi-pad package was consciously making a statement about social taboo and physical reality. When I asked her why she chose this costume theme, she said it was because of

the whole idea of it being such a taboo. Nobody really talks about it yet it's all over, on TV, billboards, in magazine ads. And then it's such a basic thing—it's so absurd. One thing was trying to see people's reaction, trying to get a reaction.

Thus it appears that two motives were operating: on the one hand, she thought it was a clever, original idea that could be successfully executed and would provoke a reaction from those who saw the costume. In addition, she felt the need to confront the apparent conflict between exploiting a physical process for money and yet otherwise consigning it to the realm of social taboo. She perceived the generic maxi-pad package costume as a forceful means of directing attention to this contradiction in our society.

Another young woman chose to make a more personal statement, one that reflected directly on herself. Her statement was also more esoteric, fully intelligible only to those who knew her well. One of her normal interests is the care of lost or orphaned wild animals, such as squirrels, possums, raccoons, and the like. Thus, when she chose to go out as a run-over possum, complete with tire marks, she surprised some of her friends. When I asked her about it, she said that previously she had gone out as a gypsy and other positive characters of this sort:

I'd had enough of this goody goody stuff. I wanted to be something really disgusting. I also felt that I had the strength to poke fun at myself, and to poke fun at some of the things I take seriously. There's something funny or ridiculous about someone who rescues little animals. It gives people something to pick on that I don't feel uncomfortable about, and keeps them away from my real anxieties.

This woman found a practical mission for Halloween costuming, that of beating her friends to the punch by creating a self-parody to effectively defuse parodies others might generate. Moreover, this self-parody served to orient attention towards an aspect of her personality she felt could withstand scrutiny, while leaving more vulnerable domains untouched.

These two accounts indicate the degree of earnest introspection and contemplation that attends the moment of choosing a costume theme. They demonstrate that in at least some cases the choice stands as a public declaration, a personal statement whose import may range from a display of personal adequacy to a critique of social inhibitions to a tactical parody of one's serious self. Even if these costumes are not enacting sacred truth, as costuming frequently does in some cultural groups, they are nonetheless providing a format for significant commentary on personal and social values.

*Getting it together*

As the previous commentary suggests, choosing a costume theme and getting the costume together are not always separate activities. Not infrequently a costume theme emerges fortuitously as people try on old clothes from the closet or rummage through abandoned items at the Salvation Army. But in the majority of cases, the idea precedes the practical steps taken to assemble the ingredients of that costume and put it together. The costume theme, in these cases, originates as a mental plan, and the costumer then sets about bringing this idea into reality.

The journals recount considerable mapping out of possible costumes, many of which are eventually discarded. Generally, these excerpts report the germ of an idea and a rough sketch of how a costume might be assembled from available resources. This preliminary stage leaves room for many visions and revisions:

(39) Helen decided not to be a genie because she doesn't want to make the outfit out of the material she bought so now she is going to be a Playboy Bunny.

(40) Now I don't want to be an army man. I would rather be something cuter.

(41) Thought about what I was going to be for Halloween. I think maybe a cavewoman but I'm still fairly undecided.

(42) I think I'm going to be an old lady, and wear a long dress with a bonnet, or an old-time bathing suit.



(43) What to be on Halloween: I have a few different ideas. A midget man with a big face. You take a pillowcase and draw a big face on the lower half and the upper half is all colored for hair. In the hair area are the holes for your nose, eyes, etc. The pillowcase comes down to the top of your hips; then pull on a long sleeve shirt to meet the pillowcase; then the shorts come around the knees with socks and big shoes. A Christmas tree, wear all green, make decorations and put them on me, then wrap lights around me and put a star on my head and bring out the extension cord.

Once the Halloween costume theme is chosen, two steps are necessary to design a costume to embody that idea: the creation of a master plan, a kind of costume blueprint; and the assembling of the appropriate materials. I did not encounter any evidence of actual blueprints being drawn, though this would not be out of the question. Rather, the costumer creates a mental plan, which may be quite elaborate and may evolve as the project advances:

(44) Two of the girls want to dress up as Siamese twins, they've started looking for huge clothes they can both get into.

(45) We are going to dress up as pillow people. That's when you decorate a pillowcase as a huge face, and then tie a sweatshirt around your waist to make yourself look really short.

(46) One guy is going as an ostrich. He made a cardboard body and covered it with feathers and tissue paper, used some kind of big vacuum hose for the neck and put a head on it. He is also going to wear leotards and was trying to make ostrich feet.

(47) I started working on my costume. I'm really fired up about this. I'm going as a douche. I'm using hefty bags with a hose from a vacuum cleaner. I cut the holes out of the bag so I can step in.

(48) This year I will go as a nerd. I have not heard of any idea like this, it will truly be unique. I will wear high-water black trousers with white socks and black oxford shoes. I will wear a white shirt with a bow tie and include in my upper left pocket an assortment of pens, slide rule, and other garbage.

The costume theme is selected and the costumer has calculated the steps that must be taken to bring the costume into existence. The stage of scrounging around for appropriate materials, the raw ingredients of the costume, ensues. Costumers reveal interesting differences in their approach

to this problem. Some simply buy a ready-made costume to wear in unaltered form, but this choice is somewhat rare. More often a store-bought costume serves merely as a starting point:

(49) For several years now I have been enftuated with a little blue monster from Sesame Street—GROVER! As I was browsing through the Mall today I was practically in tears when I found a boy's size 6-8 costume of my beloved furry friend. With no questions asked, I purchased the incredibly small outfit. Once I got it home, I commenced to cutting and altering. The mask, a blue hat, a blue shirt, and blue sweatpants made up my costume.

The journals indicate a propensity to secure materials and accessories at local commercial outlets, but a strong preference for arriving at the finished product through original design and handiwork. Most of the costumes recorded require a certain flair for tinkering with an eclectic array of resources, some store-bought, some found abandoned in closets and charity stores, some adapted from virtually any sort of supplies lying around the house. The journals give explicit recognition to the importance of individual creativity in fashioning a costume:

(50) Everyone is making their own costumes. I don't know of any of my friends who bought one.

(51) I always thought making up my own costume was one of the funnest parts of Halloween.

(52) We were also talking about how expensive it is to go out and buy costumes. About how the business world just takes advantage of the season. We decided we would much rather put together our own costume. Creating it ourself.

(53) He said he was going to be something very basic. One idea that he had was to dress totally in white, put on a white tail, and go as sperm cell. This guy is pretty off-the-wall. I told him maybe he ought to go out and rent a costume. He said no. To him a big part of Halloween was the originality people put into their costume.

(54) A friend of mine said a made-up face is always better than a mask.

Costumes are sometimes bought or rented, especially in relation to such theme parties as "Whores and Pimps" or "The Roaring 20s" sponsored by fraternities and sororities, but there is a marked preference for original

costumes, based either on unique or traditional themes, but assembled through the handiwork of the costumer.

In addition to visiting local outlets to purchase costume accessories, costumers draw on resources available to them from friends and relatives. As the raw materials are assembled, a great deal of borrowing takes place, as people literally raid each other's closets looking for likely components:

(55) Decided to be a football player this Halloween. My friend Tim gave me his equipment.

(56) A guy named Scott asked me if I would dress him like a girl. So, we put a red skirt on him and a tight beige sweater with big boobs. Then we put blue eye shadow, red lipstick, and blush. We curled his hair to make him look more like a girl.

(57) My mom called to inform me that she had sent the outfits for my Halloween costume. At about 11:30 a.m. they arrived. These were two long dresses for being old ladies, one bonnet, and one apron.

(58) People are seeing if they can borrow things to make their costumes look good.

(59) One of my friends works at the Tudor Room in the Union and she is going to let me wear her uniform and be Snow White.

(60) My friend was dressed up as President Reagan. He sprayed his hair black and put on some grease. His mother the day before went out and bought him a dark grey suit at the Goodwill store.

Kinship and friendship networks enter into Halloween costuming not only as a source of ideas for costume themes, but also as a practical means to obtain costume ingredients. In many instances, friends or neighbors willingly serve as grooms and hair dressers for the individual in search of a disguise. Frequently, parents played a role in this phase of the operation.

The ingredients used to create costumes are incredibly eclectic and a single costume may incorporate several different materials.

(61) April came as a kitchen table. She took this picture frame and put cardboard in it, cut a hole in it, and put a table cloth (with a hole in it) on it. Then she glued paper plates and cups and plastic utensils to it, and stuck fake fruit on her neck and around her head so she was a centerpiece.

This example illustrates many features typical of the costumes recorded

in the journals. It utilizes diverse ingredients, store-bought and found; some of these retain their normal significance (the paper plates) while others take on a new role (the picture frame); the raw materials may be either presented intact or altered to fit the costume theme.

Objects from almost any conceivable context were brought into play in the fashioning of Halloween costumes. Costumers most commonly drew upon clothing, often archaic in nature. A variety of everyday objects lying around the house also came into play: pillowcases, sheets, such supplies as lettering, yarn, broomsticks, garbage bags, vacuum hoses, tissue paper, aluminum foil, and dishrags. At local stores, costumers purchased cloth material, fake noses, masks, face paint, and the like. The natural world provided leaves, grass, feathers, and even a live black cat.

Likewise, a number of handiwork techniques were used to fashion these ingredients into a finished costume. Perhaps the most common ones were cutting and sewing, along with face, hair, and body painting. The variety of techniques and materials is suggested in the excerpts below:

(62) My friend was an Indian. We took and cut up an old shirt of hers. We cut long strips to hang from the front and down the sleeves. Then she got out the markers and we made Indian designs. A sun was on the front, a bird on one sleeve, and a teepee covered the back. She left her hair long and straight and then she wore an old dishrag around her head for a headband, with old faded blue jeans and moccasins.

(63) Another unique idea I saw was a guy dressed up as a bong. He had a black cylinder around his head and a black trash bag over his body. For the bowl he used an aluminum-foil-wrapped cup filled with grass, attached to a stem coming from his stomach.

(64) My friend knocked on the door wearing his Oly keg on his head. It was painted silver with four small holes for each eye. He fastened it to his head with a shoulder harness and wore a jacket to cover up the harness.

(65) Robert dressed up as that monster on Sesame Street that lives in the garbage can. Oscar? He painted his hair green and his face. And he wore green pants and a green sweatshirt with green fur stuck on it. He also knocked out the bottom of an old garbage can and wore that strapped around him and the garbage can lid on his head. Painted on the can were the words, "Go away."

(66) I finally found my costume, it was a last minute deal. I poured

calamine lotion all over my body to make me look pale. Then I took some black and darkened my eyes and put age lines on my face. I also put calamine lotion in my hair to give it a crusty effect. . . . I went as a "freak."

### *The revelation*

However cursory or extensive the previous stages may have been, the moment finally arrives to "go out" as the particular "other" the costumer has chosen to represent. The term *revelation* is appropriate here, even though we are talking about disguises. The Halloween costume is taken as diagnostic of the costumer's personality, and is sometimes seen to be even more revealing than the ordinary composed self, which suppresses the fantasy element. It is a paradox of Halloween costuming that the depictions of the "the other" are read as signs of the self.

While the journals indicate a high level of collaboration among friends and relatives in the preparation of a costume, there is also much evidence of secrecy as costumer's withhold their Halloween identities until the appropriate moment for revelation, usually the evening of the costume party:

(67) Everyone is being quiet about what their costumes are going to be.

(68) A friend bought a miniature Oly keg to use for his Halloween costume. He wouldn't tell what he was making out of it, but he implied that it would go over his head.

Whatever the boundary of the initiated group, there is always the moment when the costumer makes his appearance before the general public. This moment of revelation is charged with excitement. The costumer not only reveals his or her own fantasy construction, but simultaneously gains access to the fantasy constructions of friends and strangers.

The journals express a consistent theme of release or liberation attendant upon going out as some fantasy figure on Halloween.

(69) A buddy of mine said that Halloween was a night when the older crowd could take on a new identity. They can do wild and crazy things that wouldn't be appropriate any other time. It's an escape.

(70) Halloween is a time for people to live out their fantasies.

(71) I like being able to dress up and do anything I want and nobody knows who I am.

(72) A lot of people wore costumes that covered their faces and these people tended to be very forward. We saw a gorilla who was running around sitting on girl's laps and hugging everyone.

(73) I saw two people with Halloween masks on. They were acting quite strange while they had their masks on, and then when the masks came off they acted quite normal. It was almost as if the mask had a magical power while it was on.

There are possibilities for abuse of this release from one's normal identity. For example, some days before Halloween last year, a man wearing a Halloween mask carried out a sexual assault in one of the dormitories. Some journal writers express concern on this point:

(74) Today I saw a lot of strange people walking about. I guess I was thinking, "What if one of these people I see isn't dressed up for Halloween? What if one of them attacks me?"

Even so, if the journals are any indication, incidents of this kind, and anxiety about them, played only a minor role in most people's minds.

While the assumption of another identity through the donning of a Halloween costume provides a sense of release from normal constraints, it often propels the costumer into a novel responsibility for behavior appropriate to the assumed identity. Not every costume entails specific behavioral attributes. For some costumers, the only behavioral constraint seems to be that of acting merry and sociable in a manner befitting a party atmosphere. But a good many of the costumes carry more or less explicit behavioral concomitants, either for the costumer or for those viewing the costume. These role prescriptions were either accepted freely or rejected as unwelcome limitations on behavior.

In some cases, the costumers deliberately designed their costume theme with its behavioral implications in mind, or else willingly accepted the role implied in the costume:

(75) He stood there in this big black gown with the face painted white and stirred the punch and just stared.

(76) Beth dressed up as a gypsy and told wild fortunes.

(77) It was a "whore and pimp" party. She was the pimp. She dressed

up as a pimp. Her name was Leroy. People would ask her for a cigarette, she had special places and pockets where the cigarette was located. She would escort the whores up the elevator and take them to the party.

(78) Two girls dressed up to put down a sorority like Tri Delts. They both went as tri-dips. They acted really stupid to simulate how a tri-delt would act.

(79) Mike was dressed up as Woody Allen and had obviously memorized everything Woody Allen had ever said in a movie.

(80) At one party some guy was dressed as a monster and all he did was stand outside the door and stare at people trying to freak them out.

These and other costumes suggested modes of behavior, verbal and kinesic, in keeping with the theme of the costume, and the costumers willingly shouldered these suggestions.

Other costumers resisted the behavioral implications of their representations:

(81) My roommate and I discussed having a party. We were going to dress up like chefs and have really nice snacks but we decided we couldn't afford it.

(82) I dressed up in a flight suit. As soon as I walked out of the bathroom door, everyone started saluting me. I knew it was going to be a long night.

(83) My sister said she dressed some guy up as girl, and everyone kept pinching him in the butt, so he decided to change back into jeans.

(84) My costume was a problem in the basement—it was so big it kept dragging the spiders and their webs down.

The general issue of behavior appropriate to the costume theme can be treated under the heading "staying in character." As these entries suggest, some people gladly took on these roles, while others did not. For many, the initial fascination with the role becomes burdensome:

(85) I got bored with the character real quickly. It might be fun for a while but at a party it gets in the way of your having a good time. It gets old. As the party went on, more and more people would get rid of their costumes.

Costumers were generally sensitive to the reactions their costumes produced in others:

(86) Lots of people liked my football uniform.

(87) It was really fun. We both dressed up as nuns. As we strolled from party to party, we heard a lot of jokes about our costumes, especially habit jokes.

(88) Not too many of the costumes that my friends are wearing are too original. They're all sports related and fairly boring.

(89) My costume looked really good.

(90) A lot of people did shrooms [mushrooms]. A whole lot of people. That seems to be the thing to do for Halloween.

(91) Of course my costume was a big success. People were writing graffiti all over it [he went as a bathroom wall]. My favorite quote: "Virginity is like a bubble: one prick and its gone." A girl wrote this on my costume.

These excerpts suggest that the moment of revelation is a continuous process, as the costumer successively encounters one person after another. Each encounter sets up a communicative frame in which the costumer presents his or her representation as the initial stimulus, the observer reacts in some fashion, and the costumer takes note of the response. The representations might be simply the costume as a visual stimulus, or perhaps the costume plus attendant behavior, if the costumer in some way enacts the role depicted in the costume. Likewise, the range of responses is large, from a mere positive or negative indication to some form of reciprocal improvisation.

Most of the costumers thrive on the reactions they provoke. Often evaluations are made specific through the device of the Halloween costume contest. One local bar had a prize for the *best*, *worst*, and *least* costume. Prizes are also awarded at many private costume parties. But only a few individuals win prizes. Short of this, there is also the recognition gained for one's cleverness or skill in costuming. Informal recognition is greatly valued, and often notoriety is as good as fame. The generic maxi-pad person was delighted with the two reactions she got to her costume. Some of the women she encountered reacted very positively, along the lines of, "Oh, I use these all the time, those are great!" The other reaction was one of quiet embarrassment, "Oh, that's real interesting." Her friends started calling her "Maxi" and she recounted



with pride that one individual recognized her months later at a party, and called out enthusiastically, "Maxi-pad, it's you!"

With the close of the Halloween season, the costumes are retired, in some cases permanently, in others, until the next Halloween season. Some elements of the costume may be discarded; others, returned to their normal province of use. The costumers' thoughts may well jump to the next occasion when an inhabitable representation must be prepared:

(92) People are talking about next year, what they are going to be, which I think is good. They see other people's costumes and this gives them an idea of what they want to dress like next year.

*Indiana University  
Bloomington, Indiana*

